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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ACCRA 001985

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [GH](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: GHANA GEARING UP FOR ELECTIONS

Classified By: PolChief Scott Ticknor for reasons 1.5 (d and e).

11. (SBU) Summary: With slightly over two months to go before Ghana's presidential and parliamentary elections, the two major political parties have launched their campaigns, published manifestos and announced their vice-presidential candidates. Other minor parties remain disorganized. The pre-election mood is relatively calm, despite a few isolated incidents of violence. The primaries, which are still ongoing, have knocked out several incumbents, including two Ministers of State. The Electoral Commission (EC) had some difficulties with the voter registration and extended its 'mopping up' registration exercise until September 30. Opposition contacts are frustrated with the alleged advantage the incumbent President has had in garnering media coverage, with the EC's problems in the registration process, and with its inability to respond convincingly to complaints. The publication of the voter register in mid-October will be an important milestone in reinforcing (or further undermining) confidence in Ghana's election process. End summary.

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FOUR IN THE RING  
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12. (U) While candidates cannot submit their official nominations to the Electoral Commission until mid-October, at this point there are four declared presidential candidates: President John Kufuor of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), John Evans Atta Mills of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), Convention People's Party (CPP) leader George Aggudey, and Dr. Edward Mahama of the People's National Convention (PNC) party. On October 1, the PNC joined with two other small parties, the Great Consolidated Popular Party (GCPP) and the Every Accountable Ghanaian Living Everywhere (EGLE) party to form a "Grand Coalition" to support PNC presidential candidate Mahama. On October 2, GCPP leader Dan Lartey argued he should be the presidential candidate instead of Mahama -- and the coalition fell apart. Although discussions between the parties are ongoing, most observers are skeptical the coalition will come together with any strength.

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RUNNING MATES DECLARED  
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13. (U) On September 18, President Kufuor announced that he would retain as his running mate current Vice President, Alhaji Aliu Mahama. Mahama has been criticized as ineffective by some in the NPP, most prominently by Victor Newman, a founding member of the party. Nonetheless, Mahama was apparently chosen again because, as a northern Muslim, he balances the ticket.

14. (U) On September 23, the opposition NDC officially launched its campaign and selected its own northern Muslim, Alhaji Mohammed Mumuni, as a running mate for its presidential candidate, John Atta Mills. Mumuni's selection is seen by some as a strategic move by the NDC to capitalize on party line divisions between the Andani and Abudu tribes in the north. On September 28 Mumuni was in a car accident (he remains in the hospital) effectively removing him as a campaign player for the next few weeks. (See bios in paras 13, 14).

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INCUMBENTS FLAGGING: THE PRIMARIES CONTINUE  
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15. (U) Party members continue with the selection of parliamentary candidates through primary elections across the country's 230 constituencies. While many cabinet members won their primaries with ease, some incumbent Members of Parliament lost their candidacies, including two Ministers of State and several MPs with key positions in the ruling government. Senior Minister J.H. Mensah, MP for Sunyani East, faced a record five opponents and won his primary only after intervention by the President and party headquarters.

16. (U) Constituents from several constituencies have complained that senior NPP officials imposed candidates on local constituencies without primary elections. Over the past month, in a few instances in Greater Accra, NPP mobs physically assaulted regional party leaders to protest the imposition of candidates.

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MANIFESTOS LAUNCHED  
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17. (U) On July 31, the NDC launched its manifesto for the 2004 election. Entitled "A Better Ghana", the manifesto predictably directs considerable criticism against the NPP. The opening message from the party's founder, former President Jerry Rawlings, states that "President Kufuor and his NPP promised heaven but have landed Ghanaians in the burning flames of hell." In his opening remarks, Atta Mills promised that the NDC would "remove the current atmosphere of suspicion, mistrust, and marginalization of anyone who is assumed to be an ally of the present opposition." In its manifesto, the NDC acknowledges that global institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank cannot be "wished away" entirely, but it clearly urges Ghanaians to be more independent from the policy prescriptions of these organizations. On social, foreign, and regional policies, the NDC's platform does not differ considerably from the NPP's.

18. (U) On September 18, the NPP launched its own manifesto, entitled "So Far, So Very Good". The macroeconomic achievements of the NPP administration feature prominently. In contrast to the NDC, the NPP trumpets its successes with international donor institutions. The manifesto praises the Kufuor government's achievement in reaching HIPC completion point in 2004. It also underscores Ghana's selection as a Millennium Challenge Account prospect. The manifesto highlights Ghana's first-ever invitation to a G-8 meeting and President Kufuor's role in ECOWAS. It quotes British Prime Minister Tony Blair as saying in May 2004, "President Kufuor is a role model in the African continent and a blazing trail, who should be followed and emulated."

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'MOPPING UP' COMPLETED  
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19. (U) The Electoral Commission is still completing the voter registration process. It has finished scanning registration forms from all ten regions into a centralized database of voters. The EC initiated a 'mopping up' exercise September 3-7 to give all voters who registered during the initial registration an opportunity to obtain photo identification cards (which are required for voting). Faced with logistical challenges, the 'mop up' was extended until September 30. The EC has announced it would publish a provisional voter's register on October 12-17 for public scrutiny.

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EXPECTATIONS OF A PEACEFUL ELECTION  
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10. (SBU) Observers expect that elections will be generally peaceful, although there could be scattered incidents of violence. The past month has been filled with events promoting peaceful elections, including a prayer meeting attended by visiting Nigerian President Obasanjo. In a demonstration of support for the democratic process, the NPP and NDC invited all political parties to address their conventions.

11. (U) Nonetheless, the selection of two northern Muslim vice presidential candidates from opposing clans has the potential to fan communal friction in the north. In the northern region of Dagbon, the 2002 murder of the Ya-Na Yakubu Andani (king) remains a central and highly divisive issue. The NDC has leveraged this issue to disadvantage the NPP within the Dagbon traditional area, which encompasses twelve constituencies. Questions still remain about the government's role during the violent clashes in 2002 and its inability to find the murderers of the king and forty other victims. The Andanis, who support the NDC, continue to accuse the government of playing a central role in the murders. The Abudus, who support the NPP, deny the allegations. According to radio reports, on October 3, NPP youth in Yendi (the traditional capital of Dagbon) attacked NDC supporters and set fire to a local chief's palace, resulting in some injuries. The situation in the Dagbon traditional area is generally volatile and there could be other incidents of small-scale violence in the heat of the election.

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SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT FAIRNESS  
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12. (C) At an October 4 pre-election lunch for members of civil society, hosted by Charge, several NGO contacts voiced concerns about fairness in the election campaigns. Like our small party contacts, they believe the NPP is using its incumbency to garner disproportionate media coverage and access to state resources for electoral benefit (although they concede some of this is inevitable with an incumbent

candidate). Reverend Fred Deegbe, General Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana and a member of the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO), underscored the need for observing and auditing during the pre-election period, which he thought is more open to manipulation than the polling on election day itself. CODEA is planning to field over 5,000 domestic observers, not only for polling day but, for the first time, also for a period during the pre-election campaign. The lackluster performance of the Electoral Commission has some donors and party contacts worried. A number of contacts have shared concerns that as many as 700,000 people were reportedly unable to register to vote, mostly in regions more likely to support opposition candidates. Donors to the Electoral Commission, particularly local British, Canadians and Danish officials, are concerned that the EC appears unable to account for its budget and reportedly will be seeking an additional 5 million USD to run the election. They complain that the EC is inaccessible and appears overwhelmed by the massive registration process.

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COMMENT  
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13. (C) Just over two months before the December 7 elections, Ghana is relatively calm and the electoral rhetoric is moderate. President Kufuor has been actively touring the country, and the NPP has been effective at projecting his engagement in the media. The NDC has yet to hit its stride and the smaller parties are weakened by on-again-off-again alliances and a lack of funding. Some in the business community voice ambivalence, unhappy with the performance of the NPP government but turned off by former NDC President Rawlings, who has been active on the NDC campaign trail. The concerns about fairness in the run-up to the election -- while not dissimilar to NPP claims before the 2000 election -- bear watching. We will engage the Electoral Commission on a range of election issues in the next week. The completeness and acceptability of the soon-to-be-published voter registration list will be an important indicator of whether this election seems to be on track. End Comment.

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BRIEF BIOS OF THE VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES  
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14. (U) Alhaji Mohammed Mumuni, 55, is a Muslim Dagomba (Adani clan) and the Member of Parliament for Kumbunu, an important constituency of Dagbon in the Northern Region. He holds a Master's degree in law from the University of Ghana and worked as a private lawyer in Tamale and as a District Magistrate. After a falling out with the Convention People's Party (CPP), Mumuni won his first parliamentary seat in 1996 as an NDC candidate. He was Minister of Employment and Social Welfare (with Cabinet rank) in the previous NDC government and is currently the ranking MP for Legal, Constitutional and Parliamentary Affairs.

15. (C) Alhaji Aliu Mahama, Ghana's current Vice President, is a Muslim Dagomba from Yendi (Abudu clan) in the Northern Region. He holds a Bachelors of Science in Building Technology from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi. He worked for the now-defunct State Construction Corporation and later formed his own civil engineering and contracting business. He served as a local Assemblyman for the Tamale Municipal Assembly, was active in the Dagbon Youth Association, and quietly supported the NPP before being nominated as the NPP's vice presidential running mate in 2000. As Vice President, Mahama has earned a reputation for integrity and congeniality, although his detractors see him as ineffective and unschooled in politics.

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